03/27/24 BIG TECH

More Than 2,900 Elementary Students in Waterloo Region Suspended for Out-of-Date Vaccine Records + More

The Defender's Big Brother NewsWatch brings you the latest headlines related to governments' abuse of power, including attacks on democracy, civil liberties and use of mass surveillance. The views expressed in the excerpts from other news sources do not necessarily reflect the views of The Defender.

By **The Defender Staff**

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More Than 2,900 Elementary Students in Waterloo Region Suspended for Out-of-Date Vaccine Records

CBC News reported:

> More than 2,900 elementary students in Waterloo region were suspended from school Wednesday because their vaccination records are not up to date.
>
> Region of Waterloo Public Health says the records must be updated under the Immunization of School Pupils Act. They must show proof of vaccination for diphtheria, polio, tetanus, pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chickenpox) and meningitis or have a valid exemption on file with public health.
>
> Public health said the last time the Immunization of School Pupils Act was enforced in Waterloo region was in 2019 with approximately 1,032 students suspended at that time.
>
> Secondary students in the region may face suspension starting May 1.

These Digital Kiosks Snatch Your Phone's Data When You Walk By

Gizmodo reported:

> Digital kiosks from Soofa seem harmless, giving you bits of information alongside some ads. However, these kiosks popping up throughout the United States take your phone's information and location data whenever you walk near them, and sell them to local governments and advertisers, first reported by NBC Boston Monday.
>
> While data tracking is commonplace online, it's becoming more pervasive in the real world. Whenever you walk past a Soofa kiosk, it collects your phone's unique identifier (MAC address), manufacturer, and signal strength. This allows it to track anyone who walks within a certain, unspecified range. It then creates a dashboard to share with advertisers and local governments to display analytics about how many people are walking and engaging with its billboards.
>
> This can offer local cities new ways to understand how people use public spaces, and how many people are reading notices posted on these digital kiosks. However, it also gives local governments detailed information on how people move throughout society and raises a question of how this data is being used.

Facebook's Project Ghostbusters Exposes Covert Surveillance of Snapchat Users

Tech Times reported:

> Recent revelations from unsealed court documents have uncovered a covert initiative orchestrated by Facebook back in 2016, known internally as "Project Ghostbusters."
>
> This operation now emerges into the light, shedding new insights into the inner workings of one of the world's most influential tech giants.
>
> Project Ghostbusters aimed to intercept and decrypt the encrypted network traffic between users of Snapchat's app and its servers. By delving into this encrypted data, Facebook hoped to gain valuable insights into user behavior, ultimately seeking to enhance its competitive position against Snapchat.
>
> These revelatory court papers, unearthed during an ongoing class action lawsuit between consumers and Meta, Facebook's parent company, offer a glimpse into Meta's concerted efforts to gain a strategic advantage over its rivals, including Snapchat, Amazon, and YouTube.

Matthews: Autocrats Gonna Mandate: Health Insurance, Vaccines, EVs and More

The Hill reported:

> The White House and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are denying that recent EPA regulations are meant to mandate that everyone switch from gas-powered to an electric vehicle (EV). Don't you believe 'em. Progressive elites rely on the power of government to force you to do what they think you should be doing. In other words, autocrats gonna mandate.
>
> How about the COVID-19 vaccine? The vast majority of Americans lined up to get the vaccine as soon as it was available, with about 1 million a day being vaccinated when Joe Biden took office.
>
> But vaccine enthusiasm waned as boosters increased and time passed, so Biden imposed a vaccine mandate (or the taking of a weekly test) on government employees and contractors, the military, healthcare workers, nursing homes and private sector businesses with 100 or more employees — an estimated 84 million Americans.
>
> He would have mandated more but the U.S. Supreme Court stepped in. The court upheld the vaccine mandate for healthcare workers and nursing homes that receive Medicare or Medicaid funds, but struck down the mandate on businesses, asserting the government overstepped its authority — something the Biden administration does regularly.
>
> It is a hallmark of the progressive mentality that if the public won't do what progressives think is best, they will use the power of government to force the public to do so. We saw it with ObamaCare, COVID-19 vaccines, EVs and many other issues — e.g., the mandated use of ethanol in gasoline. And they may be coming for your gas stove next.

Kentucky Senate Votes to Bar Employers, Schools From Requiring COVID Vaccine

Commonwealth Journal reported:

> Following a 40-minute debate, the state Senate approved a bill that would prohibit the COVID-19 vaccine from being required for student enrollment, employment or medical treatment in Kentucky.
>
> Senate Bill 295, sponsored by Sen. Lindsey Tichenor, R-Smithfield, advanced 25-11 with one member abstaining.
>
> The bill protects "individual liberties," Tichenor said but met bipartisan opposition from senators raising concerns about public health and how the bill could impact employers.
>
> Senate Bill 295 still needs to make its way through the House committee process and receive consideration from the full House. In order to maintain its ability to override a veto from Gov. Andy Beshear, the legislature would have to fully pass the bill by Friday. Tuesday is the 56th day of the 60-day legislative session.

Google Is Ordered to Identify Who Watched Certain YouTube Videos

Reclaim the Net reported:

> U.S. federal law enforcement and courts have gone a step further in the extreme efforts they are making to surveil people's activities online, including on Google's vast platforms.
>
> The latest is that the tech giant gets orders to identify all people who happen to be watching certain videos or livestreams on YouTube.
>
> After directly censoring creators and channels, and giving geolocation data of its users to the authorities in response to the controversial geofencing warrants, this is a new example of how Google can be used and abused in dragnet-style "investigations."
>
> Unmasking everyone who watched a particular video is similar to geofencing in that it makes everyone a suspect — and this, a number of experts and rights groups believe, is unconstitutional, i.e., in violation of the 4th Amendment, that protects from unreasonable searches.

Bill Maher to Launch Podcast Network, Hires Ex-ESPN Anchor Sage Steele as First Host

The Hollywood Reporter reported:

> HBO Real Time host Bill Maher is launching a podcast network. The Club Random Studios network (the name is derived from Maher's Club Random podcast), will seek to host podcasts built on an idea of "freedom of expression," the late-night host tells The Hollywood Reporter.
>
> The first podcast on the network, which Maher is backing alongside co-creators Chris Case and Chuck LaBella, will be hosted by Sage Steele, the former ESPN SportsCenter anchor who parted ways with the channel last year after settling a free speech lawsuit. Steele filed the suit alleging retaliation after she made controversial comments about the COVID-19 vaccine mandates on a podcast hosted by Jay Cutler.
>
> "She's the perfect choice to be our first new host because, like me, she pissed off Disney. There's a certain poetic symmetry to that," Maher says of Steele's show, which launches today (Maher, of course, tussled with Disney after ABC canceled his show Politically Incorrect in 2002).

TikTok's Troubles Just Got Worse: The FTC Could Sue Them, Too

Politico reported:

> The Federal Trade Commission has been investigating TikTok over allegedly faulty privacy and data security practices and could decide in the coming weeks to bring a lawsuit or settlement, according to three people with direct knowledge of the matter.
>
> The commission is weighing allegations that TikTok, and its Beijing-based parent company ByteDance, deceived its users by denying that individuals in China had access to their data, and also violated a children's privacy law, according to the people, who were granted anonymity to discuss a confidential matter.
>
> The agency, in partnership with the Justice Department, could either file a lawsuit or settle with the company, though a settlement has yet to be reached, the people said.

Amazon Loses EU Court Bid to Delay Digital Rules on Online Ads

Politico reported:

> Amazon lost a legal bid to delay obeying part of the European Union's new content moderation law.
>
> The U.S. online marketplace had claimed that the Digital Services Act (DSA)'s requirement to make its online advertisement library publicly available would hurt its fundamental rights to privacy and the freedom to conduct a business.
>
> Court of Justice Vice President Lars Bay Larsen rejected the company's request to suspend the DSA until its main legal challenge had been ruled on, saying this would delay the effect of the law "potentially for several years," risking efforts to make online platforms safer, according to a press release issued on Wednesday.

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Amazon - not so fun when the shoe is on the other foot, is it?
Bill Maher... (yawn. whatever dude)
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